

## Creating A Healthy Foodshed: Closing the Gap Between Health, Hunger and Food Production



WSU King County Extension continues its work to create a healthier, more sustainable and just food system for King County. We're taking a systems-based approach to improving food access, nutrition education, sustainable farming, food production, processing and distribution, and community and economic development. We believe to effectively address food security requires strong and mutually beneficial connections among all food system stakeholders. Efforts to create a local food policy council and to improve farm to school connections continue to grow.

The seemingly paradoxical fact that Washington residents are both hungry and obese is a key indication that our community

health is in jeopardy. Rates of chronic disease and disabling conditions that are associated with poor diet and lack of exercise continue to escalate year after year. Unfortunately, these indicators are disproportionately prevalent in low-income communities, particularly low-income communities of color.

Furthermore, farms in the Puget Sound struggle in the context of increasing globalization of the food economy, and local economies are straining, especially in rural areas. Meanwhile, food production is generally so far removed from the people who eat, the eaters, that many no longer have access to fresh, local food, or knowledge of basic nutrition and food preparation.

### GOALS:

- Increased understanding of nutrition and healthy eating practices – emphasizing connections to food sources.
- Increased access to healthy foods -- people connected to local food sources are people connected to healthy fresh food.

### Establishing a Seattle/King County Food Policy Council

Local food systems are often better equipped to address local concerns about hunger, farmland, environmental issues and energy costs. Yet, our local governments have no comprehensive local planning process to ensure a resilient, sustainable and just food system. No local government jurisdiction has a "Department of Food" and the government programs that address hunger, nutrition, agriculture, and food sector labor conditions are spread across many agencies and jurisdictions. Communities across the nation are coordinating their approaches to developing a healthy, sustainable food system by creating food policy councils.

Food policies councils address the need for change in a way the individual projects and organizations cannot. The purpose of a food policy council is to influence government policies that effect food systems. Food policy councils see a need for greater governmental involvement in food system problems. Establishing a food policy council (FPC) offers a way for us to be more effective by capturing the synergy of working together with a common

local food systems planning approach.

A Seattle/King County Food Policy Council will provide a role for city and county governments, in partnership with private sector (for- and non-profit) organizations, to play in decreasing food insecurity, improving health, and increasing the sustainability of our food system. Such a public-private partnership will undertake a comprehensive food system assessment in order to identify priority areas for developing policy and program recommendations, educating and engaging the public, leveraging resources for food system improvements, and strengthening linkages among food system components.

WSU KC Extension is providing leadership for establishing a Seattle/King County Food Policy Council: convening stakeholders, educating policy makers, drafting a proposal, etc. At the end of 2005 the steering committee to establish the FPC had made significant inroads and laid a strong foundation for realizing a local food policy council for Seattle and King County.

*It is time to take a coordinated approach to creating policies that will ensure all our citizens have healthy food to eat and that the supply sufficiently meets the needs of our community.*

-- Ron Sims,  
King County Exective

## WSU King County Extension Food System Activities

### Outputs:

- A number of stakeholders together generated a list of potential food system projects to be addressed or catalyzed by the FPC once it is established. This list represents a range of project ideas from simple and no cost to more extensive projects that would require funding.
- Guidelines for the structure of council once it is established. The guidelines suggest the number of members, length of term, preferred representation from the food system, appointment process, committees and guiding principles.
- Over 60 endorsements from organizations and individuals. These endorsements are important for demonstrating community support for creating the council.
- A letter of support from King County Executive, Ron Sims was received and presented on May 13 at the Overweight Prevention Forum in Shoreline, WA.
- Supported and participated in the Food and Nutrition Working Group of the King County Overweight Prevention Initiative
- Endorsed Sustainable Seattle's effort to develop local multiplier indicator within food industry.



### **Farm to School Connections**

WSU KC Extension has established The Farm to School Connections Team -- individuals, parents, agencies, and organizations working to make farm-to-school connections. This group has been meeting monthly during the school year as way to learn and network in order to make

connections in schools to local, fresh food and farming. Farm to school connections range from classroom activities to farm field trips, to serving local farm foods in school cafeterias and more. Together the group represents efforts in eight school districts.

Mission statement: The mission of the Farm to School Connections Team is twofold: to better the nutrition environment in schools and to support local farms. We hope to accomplish these goals through nutrition and agriculture education, by fostering economic relationships between the two sectors, and by serving as a network and support group for those who share these goals.

### Outputs:

- Farm to School Connections Team Monthly Meetings
- Pike Place Market, the Highline School District, and WSU KCE were awarded a grant for \$165,000 for the USDA Community Food Project Competitive Grant Program titled, "Farm to School Connections -- Pike Place Market Basket School Food Project."
- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) panel discussion was held at Spiritridge Elementary in Bellevue, WA in March to introduce the idea of this type of direct farm purchasing to families in the area.
- Developed a mission statement for the group.
- The team identified a number of projects for grant funding.
- Formed a steering committee and a committee to organize an application for a Community Food Project grant.
- Established a list serve to build capacity and facilitate communication of the team (f2sconnections@lyris.cahnr.wsu.edu).
- Compiled list of nearly 20 different efforts represented by those who participate.
- Drafted fact sheet on how to conduct farm field trips.

### Accomplishments:

- Received mainstream media attention via guest column in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer written by Sylvia Kantor and Branden December 2, 2005 [http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/opinion/250508\\_food02.html](http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/opinion/250508_food02.html)
- Inspired the City of Seattle to create an interdepartmental team to address food system issues
- City of Seattle's Environmental Action Agenda for '06 will include item related to food
- UW Program on the Environment and City of Seattle are working together to conduct a food system assessment through a Luce Fellowship project.

Next steps will include developing media strategy to further promote the effort to establish the food policy council; drafting charter documents for both the city and county to approve; obtaining staffing, space, and a small overhead budget to cover the cost of council coordination; and finally, appointing charter members to the council.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sylvia Kantor".

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